Healthy Alberta Baseline Survey

Quantitative Report –

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Presented to: Calder Bateman on behalf of Alberta Health and Wellness

Presented by: Criterion Research Corp.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. OBJECTIVES

In August and September 2002, Criterion Research Corp. (Alberta) conducted a survey of the Alberta general public for Calder Bateman on behalf of Alberta Health and Wellness. The survey preceded a promotional campaign intended to positively affect Albertans' behaviour and attitudes about healthy eating and being physically active. The purpose of the survey was to determine self-reported behaviors, perceptions and attitudes about healthy eating and being physically active prior to the launch of the campaign. The survey is intended as a baseline against which to compare changes in the same attitudes and behaviors after the campaign was launched.

A total of 1600 general population interviews were conducted. The sample was designed to include 400 respondents in the Edmonton census metropolitan area, 400 in the Calgary census metropolitan area, 400 in other cities and 400 in towns and rural areas.

Telephone interviews were randomized across and within households within each geographic region. The survey was completed by the adult in the household who had the most recent birthday (18 years of age or older).

The margin of error for 1600 interviews is ±2.45 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error for the sample size of 400 respondents within each of the four geographic regions is accurate to within ±4.90 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

2. OVERVIEW

Albertans are concerned about healthy eating and being physically active. However, they are not managing healthy eating and physical activity as well as they think they are. Albertans generally believe they are active and including healthy eating in their lives, and that they are well informed about healthy eating and being physically active. The survey results indicate a gap between the public's perceived knowledge and perceptions about their effort in the areas of physical activity and healthy eating and their behavior in these regards. The survey also reveals there are opportunities to motivate Albertans to increase healthy eating and physical activity.

3. PERCEPTIONS OF ALBERTA HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Alberta Health and Wellness is starting the communications campaign from a strong position with the majority of respondents viewing Alberta Health and Wellness with high regard. Three-quarters (74%) of respondents agree (4,5,6,7 ratings) that Alberta Health and Wellness is **a trustworthy and reliable source of information** on healthy eating and being physically active. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents strongly agree (6,7 ratings) and 45% moderately agree (4,5 ratings) that the ministry is a trustworthy and credible source. There is potential for increasing the level of agreement given the larger number of "don't know" responses (16%) and the possibility that those expressing moderate agreement could be moved to an attitude of strong agreement.

- Almost as strongly, respondents view the ministry as providing **useful and relevant information.** Seven in ten (70%) respondents agree that Alberta Health and Wellness provides useful and relevant information on healthy eating and being physically active. Thirty percent (30%) of respondents strongly agree and 40% moderately agree. There is an opportunity to increase the level and strength of agreement given the proportion of "don't know" responses (19%) and the possibility that those expressing moderate agreement can be moved to a position of strong agreement.

4. ALBERTANS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN HEALTH

- Albertans generally consider themselves to be in good health but recognize there is room for improvement. Virtually all respondents (98%) agree (4,5,6,7 ratings) that they are **responsible for their own health**. Most respondents feel they are in good (48%) to excellent (45%) health. However, more than half of all respondents do not select the option of **excellent health**. Also, about one in every ten (13%) respondents report their health is now worse compared to one year ago.

5. SELF PERCEPTIONS OF RELATED HEALTH FACTORS

- Almost half (49%) of respondents perceive they are **overweight** to some degree. Females more frequently perceive themselves to be either a little overweight (36%) or overweight (17%) compared to males (32% a little overweight and 10% overweight). A lower proportion of Edmonton (32%) and Calgary (32%) respondents indicate they are a little overweight compared to those in other regions (37% to 40%). A higher proportion of Edmonton respondents (41%) feel that their weight is just about right compared to rural respondents (30%).

- While more than half (54%) of all respondents have used **tobacco products** at some time, only 22% are currently tobacco product users

6. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

6.1 Assessment of Being Physically Active

- Although most respondents lack accurate knowledge of the facts about what **frequency and duration** of physical activity is recommended in Canada's Physical Activity Guide, a substantial proportion of them do have a good general sense of what is an appropriate frequency **or** duration when these are considered separately. Four in ten (39%) respondents suggest that an appropriate level of physical activity is recommended on four or more **occasions** during a week. Thirty-five percent (35%) of respondents offer a range including 33% suggesting a range of 21 to 30 minutes **duration** or 31 to 40 minutes duration (2%).

- While most Albertans take part in some form of planned physical activity, many do not. In terms of the type of physical activity, more than half (60%) of respondents participate in **planned physical activities**. Almost half of all respondents (43%) and the majority of overweight respondents (64%) report their physical activity over the preceding seven days as **not meeting the recommended standard** identified in Canada's Physical Activity Guide. This represents a significant opportunity to increase the level of physical activity among Albertans.

- The majority of respondents (53%) report participating in **planned physical activity** only twice a week or less frequently. One-third (30%) of respondents put light effort into their planned activity and one-third (34%) put in a moderate effort. Slightly higher proportions participate in **unplanned physical activities** at the light or moderate level. There is opportunity to increase the level of unplanned physical activity among Albertans by suggesting and encouraging interesting activities involving physical activity.

6.2 Assessment of Barriers to Being Physically Active

- Two-thirds of respondents (66%) agree that **it takes confidence** to get involved in physical activity and, somewhat less strongly, that **making time** to be physically active is difficult (59%). Most respondents do not agree that **safety concerns** (71%), **costs** (74%) or the need for **special skills** (80%) interfere with being physically active.

6.3 Attitudes About Information About Physical Activity

- A high proportion of respondents (90%) agree they have enough information about **achieving and maintaining physical fitness**. Nine of ten (92%) respondents also feel well informed about increasing their activity. Fewer respondents (79%) indicate strongly that the information that is available is useful to them personally. While most respondents (55%) agree that recommendations about physical health are **often contradictory**, a substantial number (42%) do not agree.

6.4 Attitudes About Increasing Physical Activity

- A strong majority of respondents (92%) agree that engaging in planned physical activity can **make a difference to their health**. A similar percentage (92%) also agrees that if they do only small things, it will make a difference in their health. High proportions of respondents agree that benefits of increasing physical activity include **feeling better** (93%), **being healthier** (90%) and having **increased energy** (90%). The lowest proportion of strong agreement is provided for the benefit of **weight being regulated** (38%).

7. HEALTHY EATING

7.1 Attitudes About Information About Healthy Eating

- Just over half of respondents (54%) strongly indicate they feel well informed about nutrition information and that there is **enough information available** about healthy eating (58%). Almost half the respondents (44%) feel strongly that the information generally available is **useful to them**. Although almost three-quarters (70%) of respondents agree that recommendations about healthy eating are **often contradictory**, only one third (30%) express strong agreement.

7.2 Nutritional Eating Behaviors

- Albertans believe they think about healthy food choices with 93% of respondents indicating they make a conscious effort **to include healthy eating** in their life. However, most **lack accurate information** about minimum appropriate consumption levels of fruits and vegetables. Seven percent (7%) of respondents are aware of the minimum number of servings of fruits and vegetables recommended by Canada's Food Guide (5 and 10 servings). Fourteen percent (14%) of respondents underestimate the range and 28% offer only a single number of four or fewer servings instead of a range.

- Albertans believe they make healthy food choices. Almost three-quarters of respondents (72%) report making healthy choices daily. Almost half (45%) did not eat **deep fried foods** in the preceding week. This suggests Albertans can make healthy eating choices by reducing their intake of deep fried foods.

- High proportions of respondents feel they make a conscious choice to eat healthier by making **better choices in size** (89%), **choosing a healthier food** over a less healthy food (90%) and **thinking about the benefits** of healthy eating choices (87%).

7.3 Attitudes About Healthy Eating

- Virtually all respondents (97%) feel that **making good choices, even small ones** can make a difference in their health. A majority of respondents (57%) also agree that it **costs more** to eat healthier foods, although more than four in ten respondents (42%) do not agree. The majority of respondents do not agree that it is **difficult to purchase** foods that support healthy eating (66%), that it is **difficult to prepare** healthier foods (72%) and that it takes **too much time** to prepare healthier foods (72%).

- A majority of respondents strongly agree that benefits of healthy eating include **feeling better** (56%), **being healthier** (56%) and having **increased energy** (54%). A lower proportion of respondents strongly agree that one benefit of healthy eating includes **weight being regulated** (40%).